

TOURISM ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING DRAFT MINUTES
APRIL 11, 2012
GREAT FALLS, MT

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Rhonda Fitzgerald, Chair—Whitefish
Cyndy Andrus, Vice Chair—Bozeman
Philip Aaberg—Chester
Dan Austin—Billings
Ed DesRosier—East Glacier Park
Kim Holzer—Stanford

Bill McGladdery—Butte
Meg O'Leary—Big Sky
Stan Ozark—Glasgow
Gail Richardson—Bozeman
Amber Wood-Jensen—Butte

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Bev Harbaugh—Jordan

Jackie Yellowtail—Crow Agency

MONTANA OFFICE of TOURISM STAFF

Jeri Duran—Division Administrator
Carmen Levick—Administrative Assistant
Barb Sanem—Industry Program/Compliance Specialist

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2012

CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Council Chair, Rhonda Fitzgerald called the meeting of the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) to order at 6:10 p.m. Introductions of Council members, Montana Office of Tourism (MTOT) staff and the audience followed. Rhonda welcomed newly appointed Council member Dan Austin.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA—Rhonda Fitzgerald, TAC Chair

No changes to the agenda were requested. Cyndy Andrus commented that while there are no changes requested to the agenda, she referenced the TAC rules of procedure and order of business stating that there are changes to that. There will be no Montana promotion division update, no consumer marketing update, no discussion with area legislators and no lunch during this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was given.

RULES OF PROCEDURE—Cyndy Andrus, TAC Vice-Chair

Cyndy gave notice to the Council that this item will be on the June TAC meeting agenda. She asked that the Council review Section H (a) of the "Montana Tourism Advisory Council Operating Policy" in advance of that meeting. She said that the reason for this is that the rules of procedure were not followed at the February 2012 TAC meeting, and that it should be reviewed and discussed further. Rhonda stated that while the policy does state that the Council can make changes to the agenda during the meetings, the posted agenda needs to follow the order of business as stated in the policy.

The discussion at the June 5-6, 2012 meeting will determine if there will be changes to the order of business or if the entire section will be removed from the operating policy.

JUNE MEETING AGENDA—Rhonda Fitzgerald, TAC Chair

Rhonda proposed that there be a block of time set aside for a review of the tourism workshops that the Montana Office of Tourism (MTOT) and Mercury CSC are doing around the state.

INTRODUCTION

Rhonda Fitzgerald welcomed and introduced newly appointed Council member Philip Aaberg.

AUDITS & APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE—Amber Wood-Jensen, Chair

Amber said that the committee would like to review the application process. One change proposed would be to have a conference call once a month to review all applications at one time, rather than everyone on the committee reviewing the applications on their own as they come in. She said the pros to the proposed change would be that there could be more discussion, the process would be a learning tool for new members, and there possibly be more attention given to the applications. She acknowledged that it would be a big change for the regions and CVBs.

Cyndy Andrus said that it would give applicants an opportunity to be on the call with the committee to answer any questions that arise. Meg O'Leary said that she thinks some flexibility needs to be built in for last minute projects. Bill McGladdery suggested that maybe there could be two times per month to review applications so that the regions and CVBs would not have to wait more than two weeks for approval. Rhonda Fitzgerald stated that if the Council does decide to make the changes, the rules and regulations for the regions and CVBs would need to be formally changed as part of the procedure. The Council asked for feedback from the regions and CVBs.

Comments made by the regions and CVBs were:

- One or two committee meetings per month would be tough. Sometimes there is a tight turnaround and the media outlet or project opportunity does not always have a lot of flexibility.
- The current rules and regulations allow only five business days for approval, and with the proposed change, it could be about 30 days.
- It is hard to stick to that kind of timeline when good opportunities come up.
- If there were not a quorum of the committee on the call, would it have to be rescheduled?
- With small budgets, a quicker turn around than the new proposal would require
- What is broke? Is there a problem with the way the process currently is?
- Understand the need to try and streamline the process, but it needs to work for everyone.
- If there were an application submitted the day after the conference call, the wait time for approval would potentially be a full month if there were only one call per month to review the applications.

Rhonda said that she hears loud and clear that there needs to be a caveat for quick turnarounds. Amber said that there would definitely be something put in the procedure to accommodate certain circumstances. Cyndy said she thinks it is worth trying. Barb Sanem reiterated that if the Council is going to incorporate these changes, the rules and regulations need to be changed so that it follows the new procedure. As it stands now, the committee only has five business days to review the applications and with the proposed changes, it would be outside of that range.

Cyndy Andrus moved to review the application procedures of audits and applications looking at setting a specific time period in which the applications are read every month and to put it on the June 5-6, 2012 TAC meeting agenda. Kim Holzer seconded. Motion passed.

STRATEGIC OUTLINE UPDATE—Rhonda Fitzgerald, TAC Chair

Rhonda suggested a review of the TAC committees to incorporate the three goals identified during the TAC retreat last October. They are product, marketing and respect. Amber Wood-Jensen, Kim Holzer, Bill McGladdery and Jeri Duran offered to review the current committees and look at the possibility of forming new committees. There will be a report at the June 5-6, 2012 TAC meeting.

TAC MEETING ATTENDANCE—Bill McGladdery, TAC Member

Bill talked about his concern of the dwindling attendance at the TAC meetings, especially on the second day. He said that according to the rules and regulations, the regions and CVB representatives are required to be at the meetings. He pointed out that many of the things presented at the meetings potentially have an impact on what the regions and CVBs are doing in their marketing, such as updates on the projects that MTOT are doing. Another concern that he has is that communities that host the meetings work to plan a reception or outing to showcase their community and attendance at those functions are also not always well attended either. He asked for input from the Council.

Cyndy Andrus commented that it becomes more of a policy discussion amongst the Council to determine whether the meetings are primarily for the TAC to move ahead and do business or is it for the audience to participate and give feedback. She said she thinks the feedback provided by the regions and CVBs does impact the decisions made by the TAC. She said that if it is not important information for people to sit through, they are free to leave. Rhonda Fitzgerald said that the meetings used to last until 3:00 and that people were leaving by noon, and now that they end at noon, people leave at 9:30 or 10:00. She said it is hard to make adjustments and have a solution without knowing the reason people are not staying for the entire meeting. She asked for feedback from the audience.

Comments made included:

- Is there a way to shorten the meeting?
- There is a tremendous amount of valuable information provided, but between the region/CVB meetings, the Governor's conference and the TAC meetings, people are seeing the presentations more than once. While we respect the time and effort put into these presentations, we are busy too and if we have already seen the presentation or the same information already, it may not be the best use of our time to stay and see it again.
- Please do not micromanage our time. We are professionals and sometimes have other issues back in the office that take us away.
- Sometimes a subtle reminder says everything and maybe that is all that needs to be done.
- Some of the items on the Wednesday morning agendas is housekeeping type stuff such as approving committee reports, and other things that are for the TAC, not the audience. Most of the region and CVB members have already attended the committee meetings and know what the recommendations are and just need to be approved by the TAC.

Cyndy said that if there are things on the agenda that are not useful or is a repeat of something that has already been presented to let her or Rhonda know ahead of time so that changes can be made in preparing for the meetings. Bill reiterated that it does not send a great message to a presenter when they walk into a room that is half-empty. Rhonda said that if anyone had suggestions on the agenda for the meetings to feel free to send her an e-mail and she will pass it on to the executive committee.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.